

the chronicle

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Tribute to 'devoted mother'

Killed - Sarah Louise Smith

THE daughter of a cyclist killed in Essington said on the eve of her funeral that she was a "devoted" mother.

Sarah Louise Smith, aged 45, of Church Crescent, died following the December 7 accident in Blackhalve Lane.

Daughter Hayley, aged 26, said she would be "greatly missed for her caring nature and consideration".

In a statement ahead of Tuesday's service, Hayley added: "The tragedy has come as a horrendous shock to the family, who will keep her memory alive by highlighting the dangers and safety issues faced by cyclists in Blackhalve Lane."

"We urge other road users to take care and use the necessary safety precautions, as we would hate any other family to experience what we are going through."

Ms Smith, also mother to 14-year-old Peter and 12-year-old Daryl, was cycling to her job as a support worker at Pear Tree Lane care home, Wednesfield.

A 40-year-old man was arrested and bailed after the collision with a van.

Santa nav's cash record

FATHER Christmas, with the aid of a new GPS system helped raise more than £1,780 for the Rotary Club.

Bloxwich Phoenix accompanied Santa during his travels to 4,500 homes, helping him deliver 101 requested letters. His six day journey started at Blakenall and finished at the Turnberry estate.

Tracey Brown, of Bloxwich Phoenix, said: "Santa's sleigh surpassed the last two years' cash totals, which is just magnificent."

TRADERS' JOY AS MARKET THRIVES

By Craig Hughes

TRADERS are seeking extra stalls for Walsall Market after it emerged that the popular pitch is making nearly £136,000 a year in profit. The town centre pitch has been bucking the trend of other markets across the West Midlands and is generating tens of thousands of pounds.

It costs Walsall Council £493,634 a year to run the market on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, but it brings in £629,617. Tony Lerner, of the Market Traders Association, said Walsall could attract even more stallholders.

"There is a big demand for Walsall Market and we want to try and get more stalls. You could put another 10 or 20 stalls on there and they would fill," he said.

"It is a good draw, being in the town centre with all the shops there."

The main town centre market, which moved from High Street to The Bridge two years ago is thriving despite other pitches having been axed or struggling to attract trade and customers.

But Willenhall market is set to lose Walsall Council almost £50,000 this year, and Darlaston market has been axed to save money.

Economy Council chiefs are currently looking at ways to drive down costs at Willenhall, having already made £27,000 savings on its electricity supply.

Brownhills market, which was relaunched by private operators on behalf of the council, was scrapped in the summer due to lack of interest.

Income from Walsall and Bloxwich markets help to cover the Willenhall deficit.

The 40-stall Bloxwich market, off High Street, has an income of £68,603 and operating costs of £47,602.

Regeneration chief Councillor Adrian Andrew said the two thriving markets support the economy of their communities.

Police station, said: "We are extremely pleased with the results."

"Five people have been helping us with our inquiries and more than 2,000 suspected counterfeit goods have been seized."

"At Christmas, people may be looking for a bargain and can be tempted by the apparent low prices."

"What people do not realise is that the products are often of an inferior quality and buying the goods promotes and funds crime."

Surveillance of pubs and car boot sales has been stepped up, while officers are tracking internet auction sites.

Brian Jones, lead enforcement officer at Walsall Council's trading standards department, said: "The message to people who sell counterfeit goods is clear, we will be constantly on your trail."

Rene's Continental Christmas



Blue Coat pupil Rene Sanganza, aged nine, with Christmas cards from all over Europe

CHILDREN at a Walsall school have been learning to wish others a Merry Christmas in several different languages this year.

The pupils, attending Blue Coat School in Springhill Road, have been sending Christmas cards all around the world.

They have exercised their craft skills while making the cards, and Janine Walker, modern foreign language co-ordinator at the school, said 90 cards have been sent across the globe in the last few weeks as part of the

Christmas card exchange project. The children have received 90 cards in return for their efforts.

Ms Walker said: "They thoroughly enjoyed it. We had a different Christmas hymn theme for each year group, and we have received cards back showing what children do in other countries at Christmas."

The project has helped the school gain an intermediate level International School Award and support a school in Africa.

Shock as bus fare rockets by 22pc

PASSENGERS face a double whammy of fare increases with a bus firm announcing a rises of more than a fifth on one journey from Walsall while train tickets will rise by almost six per cent.

Arriva is increasing most fares in Staffordshire and the Black Country by 10p, but a fare between Walsall and Cannock will rocket 22 per cent from £1.80 to £2.20.

Rail fares will also rise an average of 5.9 per cent, higher than inflation which is running at 5.2 per cent.

Arriva managing director Bob Hind blamed the bus fare rises on inflation while train bosses promised new trains, faster services and better stations.

Mr Hind said: "No-one likes to increase their prices at such a difficult time. As everyone knows from their domestic bills, costs are steadily rising."

Councillor George Adamson, leader of Cannock Chase Council, said: "It sounds like a lot more than inflation. People who need to travel to the job centre will have already paid £2 before they have signed on."

Outcry over parking ban

A 60-SPACE car park in Willenhall town centre has closed, angering traders.

The free site at the rear of the former Somerfield store, in New Road, has been blocked off and bosses at The Co-operative cited safety reasons for the closure in case of a winter freeze.

Keith Mason, of nearby Willenhall Hardware & DIY, said shutting off the car park would hit traders at the Market Place end of town.

"It was handy for people to park for free and go into town on foot. It's not being used for anything else."

Lindsay Colbeck, for The Co-operative Group, said: "We have closed the car park to deter unauthorised use and to reduce the risks associated with its use."

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Arrests as town bar raided by police

A MAN and woman were arrested when police raided a bar in Walsall town centre.

Officers searched R1 Bar in Bridge Street at about 11.30am last Friday, suspecting the venue was being used to sell on suspected stolen goods.

A 37-year-old woman was arrested on suspicion of handling stolen goods and a 45-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of theft. Officers recovered a quantity of meat, cosmetics and chocolate.

Sgt Adam Reynolds, of Walsall police station, said: "We have acted upon intelligence received and have seized goods which we believe may be stolen. The intelligence suggested the bar was being used to handle suspected stolen goods and we will always act on information of criminality in the town centre."

Ross Hawkesford, manager of R1 Bar, said: "Ten police searched the bar for a couple of hours. Someone had come into the bar who they suspected had stolen deodorants and chocolate bars. It was just so overrated - it's ridiculous."

Police also searched an address in Milton Street, Palfrey, Walsall, and found drugs paraphernalia.

No arrests were made.



R1 Bar in Bridge Street

Donor helps family left without gifts by raider

A WALSALL mother who was left devastated when burglars took all her children's Christmas presents has had gifts donated. Kelly Hurst said she was overwhelmed and grateful.

Custody for assault on worshipper

TWO thugs who attacked a man in his 60s as he was walking to a Walsall mosque for prayers, fracturing his cheekbone and nose, have been taken into custody.

Nathan Rowe and Luke Whitehouse attacked 62-year-old Ebrahim Tarajia in Wednesbury Road at 4.15am. Mr Tarajia was punched and kicked by the intoxicated 19-year-olds, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told last Thursday.

Ms Alka Brigue, prosecuting, said CCTV film showed Rowe initiating the attack and Whitehouse joining in. Both defendants, from West Bromwich, admitted grievous bodily harm.

Rowe, of Harvills Hawthorn, was given two years in a young offenders' institution. Whitehouse, of Anson Road, was sentenced to 21 months.

One of the items stolen home was a silver Me To You pendant, and now the company behind the brand, Carte Blanche, has handed over a box full of children's presents, as well as gifts for Ms Hurst's unborn child.

The 27-year-old said: "We were devastated after the burglary. I'm so grateful for this because it will help the children have a nice Christmas."

Hundreds of pounds-worth of presents were stolen, including three Wiggle scooters, a 9ct gold bracelet, a 48in flatscreen TV, two laptops, a black Sony PSP, a red Nintendo DS, four Playstation games and a baby steriliser.

Thieves broke into Ms Hurst's home in Nursery Road, Bloxwich, on November 21.

Police are continuing to investigate and are urging anyone who is offered goods for sale or sees these items being sold to get in touch.

Anyone with information is urged to call police on 0345 113 5000.

Officers warned residents not to leave Christmas presents on show during the festive period and attract opportunistic thieves.

Carols bring old folk cheer



Lillian Perry, aged 77, right, enjoys the Green Rock Primary School carols

SCHOOLCHILDREN helped care home residents in Walsall get into the festive spirit by staging a Christmas carol concert.

Pupils from Green Rock Primary School, in Mersey Road, visited Ash Grange Care Home, in Valley Road, Bloxwich, last week to put on the show.

The 14 pupils sang a variety of songs from Little Donkey to White Christmas.

Rebecca Adams, manager at Ash Grange

Care Home, said the 40 residents enjoyed the one-hour concert and even had chance to sing along.

She said: "Our activities co-ordinator got in touch with the school about doing a Christmas carol service for the residents."

"The children had only been practising for three or four weeks. They did a wonderful job."

Principal to boost student business

THE new principal and chief executive of Walsall College has revealed plans to boost the number of apprenticeships it offers and create new student enterprises.

Jatinder Sharma was announced as the new principal of the college this month and has already started drawing up an action plan.

The father of two said: "This role gives me the opportunity to work with key partners in Walsall. We have excellent links with industry and have joined the chamber of commerce."

Spectrum

"We offered 1,000 apprenticeships last year and we are looking for that to grow."

He said the college would also be targeting those not in employment or education.

"It is important to make sure we can target and support those that are excluded," said the 43-year-old, who lives in Wolverhampton.

Mr Sharma also plans to create more entrepreneurial opportunities for students.

He said: "The college has opportunities at all ends of the spectrum from beauty to construction engineering."

Tenants are so generous

HOUSING association tenants in Walsall are helping bring Christmas cheer to people who might otherwise go without presents.

Residents on eight estates run by WATMOS Community Homes were asked to donate money, food, clothing and toiletries to the group's Giving Tree Appeal for children's homes.

Organisers Louise Walker and Joanne Griffiths said the haul had more than doubled previous years.

"This year we are in awe at the amount of gifts we have received," Louise said.

Among the gifts are DVD players, CDs, DVDs, mobile phones and toiletries.

Trial delayed

THE trial of a man who denies stealing copper worth £3,500 from a house has been adjourned by Walsall magistrates until March because a witness was unwell.

Adam Kriegel, 39, of Whitehall Road, is charged with burglary and theft at Leckie Road, Coalpoole.

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Attacker must stay in prison

A DRUNKEN reveller from Walsall jailed for kicking a man like "a football" must stay in prison, a judge ruled at an appeal hearing.

Matthew Woolley kicked Melvyn Whitehouse in the face as he lay on the ground in Stafford town centre, and the attack was filmed by on security cameras.

Woolley ran off to a nearby nightclub, leaving Mr Whitehouse lying in a pool of blood.

The victim was taken to hospital for treatment for nose, face and eye injuries.

Woolley, aged 40, of Gurnard Close, Willenhall, was jailed by magistrates in Cannock for 18 weeks earlier this month after admitting common assault.

He appealed against the sentence at Stafford Crown Court and Judge Simon Tonking reduced it to three months, but said Woolley must serve the sentence.

"This was a drunken assault on a defenceless man, in the street in the early hours of the morning," the judge said.

"Whilst you were not initially involved, you joined in and behaved with extreme violence by kicking that man as he lay on the ground."

The defence said there had been provocation.

Warning to taxi drivers

LICENSING bosses in Walsall are warning taxi drivers they will continue to monitor those who flout the law and bring them to court.

A number of private hire drivers have been brought before magistrates for being unlicensed and uninsured.

Councillor Zahid Ali, cabinet member for communities and partnerships, said: "It is imperative that both private hire drivers and owners ensure that they check their insurance documents to ensure there is adequate and correct level of insurance cover."

Attache guest

STUDENTS in Walsall enjoyed a flying visit from a US embassy representative to strengthen the school's links with America.

Assistant attaché Sharlina Hussain-Morgan visited Aldridge School for the Christmas concert, and returned the next day to discuss American culture and global education.

Pride as Poppy collections flourish in 2011

ROYAL British Legion branches in the West Midlands are celebrating a record-breaking year for their annual Poppy Day appeal, organisers said.

Collections in the Black Country and parts of Staffordshire were up on last year but donations to some Staffordshire branches fell.

The Aldridge branch of the Royal British Legion raised about £36,400, compared with last year's total of £33,000.

Collections at Morrisons' store, Aldridge, raised £7,835 and at the RBL stall in The Precinct, £3,291. The Rotary Club of Walsall

Saddlers, the Rotary Club of Walsall, the Aldridge Business Partnership and street collectors all helped boost the 2011 total.

Rosemarie Cooper, secretary of the Royal British Legion club, in Oldbury, said they had raised £19,297 this year compared with about £15,000 last year.

Recruiting

She said: "The Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have really shaken people and brought good causes like ours to the fore."

The Dudley branch generated £15,441, which was up nearly £6,000 on the previous

year's total of £9,400. Organiser Malcolm Davies said he was "delighted" with the response and said efforts had been made this year to sell poppies at larger venues.

In Quarry Bank, £29,030 was raised – a record high, up from £26,500 in 2010. And in Kingswinford, total donations rose to £34,000 from £31,000 the previous year.

Kidderminster's total has reached £32,000 compared with last year's £28,760.

Mike Cockayne, secretary and treasurer of the RBL in Lichfield said: "We have had a record year. This year we have raised £36,732 and last year £36,050. That is the

most raised in my 46 years with the RBL."

In Hednesford, poppy appeal organiser Derrick Ellison added: "We have broken the record for this area, and it is only a small area so we have done so well. This year we raised £12,700, and last year £11,200."

But in Cannock, organiser Sheila Dunning said they were down by around £1,000 this year, having raised around £12,000. She blamed a lack of collectors.

Peter Hobson, from the Stafford branch, said the total was likely to be down to around £35,000. Collectors were again in short supply.

Hunt for robbery thug who prowls quiet canal towpath

PATROLS are being stepped up at a canal towpath in Walsall following a spate of robberies there, including one which left a victim with a broken jaw. Detectives are investigating after three incidents in just two months.

It is believed all three attacks have been carried out by the same man alongside the Wyrley & Essington Canal at Bentley Mill Way, Bentley, West Midlands. Police have issued an appeal for help to identify the man.

Detective Constable Claire Cavanagh, from Walsall CID, said: "We are investigating all three robberies. "We believe that they may have all been committed by the same man who is targeting people who use this towpath."

Offender

"One of the victims suffered a broken jaw as a result of the robbery and even though the man has not attacked two of the other victims, he has threatened them."

"Despite all our investigations to date we have been unable to identify this man and prevent further attacks."

In the most recent robbery, a 12-year-old boy was threatened but was left unhurt, although his bag was stolen. The offender

was a white man in his early 20s, around 5ft 7in, skinny and scruffy, De Cavanagh said last week.

He had prominent spots on the right side of his face close to his nose, and yellow stained teeth.

The robber, who was wearing a grey hooded top, light blue jeans and black trainers, made his escape in the direction of Pleck, Walsall.

The attack happened at around 3.15pm on Monday, November 28.

A 40-year-old man was targeted by the robber on the afternoon of Monday, October 10, close to the EMR bridge on the canal towpath, although on that occasion nothing was stolen.

A 20-year-old man suffered a broken jaw when his bike was stolen in a towpath attack on Tuesday, November 1, between 5.20pm and 5.40pm.

The victim was riding his bike under a bridge when he was punched by the man, leaving him with bruising and swelling to the face.

New life for empty shop

A DISUSED shop in Darlaston is to be converted into a hot food takeaway after winning the backing of Walsall Council planning chiefs.

The business in Wiley Avenue, Rough Hay, has been agreed by town planners. The unit is currently vacant and is to open seven days a week up to 11pm on some days.

Walsall's head of planning, David Elsworth, said: "There is sufficient unrestricted on-street parking available within the area to satisfy the needs of its customers."



Senior Re-Ablement Officer Chris Brown, front and Re-Ablement Officer Andrea Booker, back, promote the new lunchtime service at Goscoe Day Centre along with service users David Stain, left Mark Pitt and assistant cook Denise Mansell

Fine food now on the menu

LUNCHTIME dining is now on the menu at a new community project in Walsall.

The Goscoe Greenacres project is being created in the grounds of the Goscoe Centre, which is used by adults with disabilities, and features a market garden, sensory garden and cafe.

A breakfast club which was set up earlier this year has proved a success and the Greenacres restaurant is now able to cater for lunchtime diners as well as offer snacks.

Walsall's social care and health chief, Councillor Barbara McCracken, said: "The breakfast club has proved a popular addition to the centre and it makes sense to start offering lunchtime dining too."

"The prices are very competitive so it's an affordable treat for local residents and the wider community as well as workers in the area who want a change of scenery when they take their break."

A new training kitchen has been established and the new breakfast club was launched earlier this year for local workers, neighbours and shoppers.

Some people with learning disabilities can use the new kitchen to receive catering training to gain qualifications and employment.

Telephone orders can also be placed for food to be collected on 01922 710312.

Concert date for OAPs' orchestra

WALSALL Senior Citizens Orchestra will perform at Leamore's Forest Arts Centre on January 5. The concert featuring classical favourites will take place at the Hawbush Road venue at 2pm.

Tickets cost £1 and are available on the door. Another show is being staged at the venue on January 25 by Martin Barry and his company of players. The Magic of Music Hall is at 1.30pm.

Old pub to be vet surgery and KFC

PLANS for a KFC and a veterinary surgery to be built on the site of a disused pub in Walsall have been lodged with the council.

Residents and councillors have been campaigning for the Leamore pub to be demolished, and planning officers have been in talks with a potential investor with a view to turning it into a takeaway restaurant and vets.

Proposals have now been submitted by developer Camlock Properties for the Leamore Lane site.

'Tell Us Once' a success in town

A SCHEME launched in Walsall to make it easier for residents to register a birth or death has been hailed a success by council chiefs.

The Tell Us Once birth and bereavement scheme allows people to report a birth or death just once.

Leisure chief Anthony Harris said: "This initiative enable us to make life easier for people who are registering a birth or death in the borough."

Pastors out on street patrols

VOLUNTEER street pastors will be patrolling the streets in Walsall in the run up to Christmas.

Street pastoring operates in more than 200 towns and cities and began in Walsall this year.

The pastors are volunteers recruited through churches in the area and their role is to engage with people in the town and provide practical support.

Family ride day

A FAMILY Cycle Ride of about 12 miles starts at 10am this Saturday, December 24, from opposite the community centre in Station Road, Walsall. Contact: 07591 852191.

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OUR local carol service gets worse with every passing year. While we have come to accept all manner of strange carols from around the world, this is the first service I have attended where the carol sheet included Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. For, lo, it is written: 'He'll go down in history.'

□□□□□□□□

MAKES you proud to be British, doesn't it? I refer to the Yuletide fad for furry hats in the shape of lions, tigers, rabbits, frogs and so on. There are not many nations with the casual self-confidence to wander the streets looking like refugees from Regent's Park. You don't see chic Parisians sashaying down the Boulevard St Michel with a toad sur la tete. Come to think if it, the French never warmed to the shell suit, either. They miss so much.

□□□□□□□□

THIS time last year I suggested light-heartedly that 2011 would see the reappearance of the Deutschmark. It hasn't happened. But it is surprising how many websites are buzzing with rumours that Deutschmark Two is being printed.

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SNEEZY is a pantomime-season enigma. In 1937, Walt Disney named six of Snow White's Seven Dwarfs after the traditional male vices: Sleepy, Dopey, Grumpy and so on. So where does Sneezy fit in? I suspect (without an ounce of proof, it has to be said) that Sneezy is a 1930s euphemism for an altogether different bodily function. Discuss.

□□□□□□□□

RESEARCH shows that one of the most frequently asked questions on the internet in 2011 was: "What is scampi?" To which the answer is: "Whatever the restaurant thinks it can get away with." Curiously, that perennial Yuletide question does not even figure in this research, namely: "Is mulled wine alcoholic?"

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SHOCK, horror, drama. Prince Harry hears his best mate is being mugged. So HRH and his protection officer not only drive to the scene but go the nearest police station and report the offence. Medals all round. I wonder what the reaction of the cops was to Prince Harry and one of Special Branch's finest suddenly appearing at the station. Desk officers are past masters at persuading complainants that a stolen BlackBerry is more of an insurance matter than a crime or, if pushed, logging it in the book as lost property. For princes and their minders, I dare say different rules apply.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Village collector 'pocketing cash'

A BOGUS charity collector pretending to be operating on behalf of the family of a woman killed in a crash has been roaming around a village near Bloxwich, it is claimed.

Police have now been called in following reports that a woman has been asking Essington residents to give money to support the children of Sarah Louise Smith, who was knocked off her bike in a fatal crash

with a Mercedes Sprinter van two weeks ago, but keeping the cash.

Residents of the village, where Ms Smith lived, have condemned the scam as "disgusting".

Essington's Councillor David Clift said he had spoken to Staffordshire Police twice about the issue.

"We have had problems with people begging for money before, sometimes even stopping people in

their cars, but it has all come to a head now. A woman has been going around the village saying she is collecting for the family - but the family haven't received anything.

"I am totally disgusted by this."

More than 450 people have signed up to a Facebook petition demanding action along Blackhalve Lane, Essington, where the crash took place early on Wednesday, December 7.

Organisers posted a message on the page saying: "We are saddened to receive a comment that a lady is collecting for the death of Sarah and is keeping the money. We have not had any contact with anyone about doing a collection and would just like to make it very clear we do not support this."

Staffordshire Police said it was aware of the issue.

Find driver who left me to die says crash victim

A HIT-AND-RUN victim left "lucky to be alive" after being mown down on a crossing in Walsall has issued a desperate plea to help catch the callous driver who left her with fractures to her skull, shoulder and collarbone as well as brain trauma.

Kate Fitzpatrick, aged 30, was flung into the air by a car which failed to stop.

She was told that the sponge in headphones she was wearing at the time helped to save her life after taking some of the force as she landed on her head.

Ms Fitzpatrick was struck on a pelican crossing in Bloxwich Lane on Tuesday, November 22 and has now been sent home from Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham.

But she continues to suffer short-term memory loss and dizzy spells.

Appeared

She was walking to her home in Reedswood Gardens from her partner Jay Davies' home in Bentley.

She now has to rely on his support as she faces months of rehabilitation.

West Midlands Police believe the hit-and-run driver was in an old-style red Ford Fiesta and it appeared the driver did not even slow down, let alone stop, to check if she was OK.

Ms Fitzpatrick, who is unable to remember any-

thing about the collision, is now urging witnesses or anyone who knows the driver to come forward.

Ms Fitzpatrick said: "I do feel I'm lucky to be still alive. "If it hadn't been for those headphones I would be dead as they helped protect my skull.

"It's like a miracle I am still here, and the thought of crossing that road again terrifies me."

Ms Fitzpatrick added: "All I remember is just pressing the button, the lights changing, the green light coming on and cars slowing - then being in hospital with the CT scanner above my head."

"It is frustrating that whoever has done this can get back to wherever they live and think they can get away with it.

"I can't go out and do my Christmas shopping.

"I just wish somebody would have some information and to make this person take responsibility for their actions."

Any witnesses are urged to call police on 0345 113 500.

Company expands

AN EXPANDING Walsall construction company which specialises in the social housing sector has bucked the national economic trend by opening its seventh regional office, creating 44 jobs.

G Purchase Construction, based in Reaymer Close, Bloxwich, has launched a new base at Charnwood Business Park, in Loughborough, Leicestershire.

Paul Williams, the firm's business development manager, said that the Midlands is a key area for further expansion for the firm, which is a leading provider of repairs, maintenance and refurbishment services.



Kate Fitzpatrick at home in Walsall, still recuperating from severe crash injuries

New fish for pond ravaged by winter

THOUSANDS of fish will be released into the pool at Wilenhall Memorial Park to replace those that were killed during the big freeze early this year.

Last winter, the popular fishing pool froze over, leaving hundreds of fish buried under a thick layer of ice.

Park experts revealed steps were being taken to make sure the same does not happen again this winter in low temperatures.

Released

The 3,000 new fish that will be released into the pool, which cost £500, will be moved into the former boating lake in the next few months.

Leisure chief Councillor Anthony Harris said: "The events of last year were distressing for all concerned.

"Even if the extreme weather hadn't been against us we couldn't simply move the fish to a new home because of regulations over contamination.

"We have purchased 3,000 new fish and the water has been treated with micro chalk which has helped to remove silt, another problematic factor."

Alastair, 4, is toy tester

A FOUR-year-old boy from Brownhills has won the chance to become an official toy tester.

Alistair Worrall, of Clayhanger, beat more than 1,000 youngsters to win VTech's Kidzoom Twist national photography competition, earning him a year's supply of toys.

The competition required people to submit a "family fun" photo, and Alastair sent in a photo of his sister playing in the garden.

He will be sent VTech toys throughout the year and will post reviews at the www.vtechuk.com website.

January fair

A COMMUNITY association in Walsall is holding a winter bazaar next month.

Joseph Leckie Community Association, hosts the event at its base in Walsdale Road West on Wednesday, January 21, from 1pm-3pm.

To reserve a table, call 01922 721071.

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MANY MORE OFFERS IN STORE

Yard raiders take three-ton press

METAL thieves have stolen a three-ton hydraulic press from an engineering firm in Walsall.

The machine, worth thousands of pounds, was stolen from a secure yard at Tipper Engineering, Hall Lane, Walsall Wood, over the weekend of December 10-11. The green and yellow press was bought just weeks ago so the industrial fasteners firm could expand its range.

Police spokesman Billy Corrigan said: "It appears to have been well organised and would have required heavy lifting equipment and a suitable vehicle."

Roads scheme's £25m booster

FUNDING for a £26 million scheme to improve roads in Darlaston as part of plans for a business enterprise zone has been approved by the Transport Secretary Justine Greening.

The scheme to improve key junctions in Darlaston, was drawn up by Walsall Council in partnership with transport authority Centro, and was one of just a handful across the West Midlands that were considered by the minister.

Mayor's festive Facebook letter

THE Mayor of Walsall has released a Christmas message to wish townsfolk a fun festive season.

Councillor Garry Perry released the message on social networking site Facebook, saying he felt "truly honoured and privileged" to hold the post of mayor.

He said: "Since May, I have been delighted to meet many groups, clubs, organisations and societies in and around Walsall to find out more about what they do and I have met many wonderful people."

"The work that is carried out behind the scenes in our town is truly remarkable, and a great credit to our communities."

Smokes charge

A WALSALL man accused of harbouring millions of illicit cigarettes in 2006 has been remanded in custody to Wolverhampton Crown Court on January 20. Kelvin Flett, aged 32, of Westminster Road, Rushall, is also accused of dangerous driving and was remanded last Friday by Walsall magistrates.

Ex admits trying to start fire

A WILLENHALL man tried to set fire to a car with a blowtorch after breaking up with his girlfriend, a court heard.

Steven Edwards, aged 39, was seen with a blowtorch outside Sandra Forrest's home behind her brother's Land Rover Discovery.

Mr Jason Corden-Bowen, prosecuting, said initially the break-up had been amicable, but it became nasty when Edwards cancelled her mobile phone contract.

"Ms Forest could hear a strange noise which she likened to the sound of a blowtorch," he said.

"She thought it was her son on computer games so she banged on the wall telling him to turn it down. He said it wasn't him."

She then looked out of the window and saw Edwards lying in long grass at the back of the car, and a flame.

The flame went out as soon as Edwards saw her, and he ran off, Mr Corden-Bowen added. She later found the grass scorched.

Edwards, of Hill Road, Portobello, admitted attempted arson and Walsall magistrates adjourned the case until January 16 for pre-sentence reports.

Ten held on metal theft

TEN people were arrested during a metal thefts crackdown. Officers from Operation Steel carried out raids at homes and scrapyards in Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall.

In Darlaston, about five tons of cabling was recovered from a yard in Darlaston, and was identified as property of Western Power.

Four men were also arrested following a burglary at a scrapyard in Willenhall on Wednesday, December 14.

The men have been released on bail. Vans were also stopped in Darlaston and Willenhall by police.

£5,000 prize in hospice lottery

ST GILES Walsall Hospice, in Walstead Road, is taking part in the St Giles Magical Winter Raffle, with prizes up to a £5,000 jackpot to be shared by 350 ticket holders.

Tickets are available at hospice shops, www.stgiles.hospice.com/lottery or 0845 370. The closing date is Saturday, December 31.

Ex-cadet NCO 'a dirty young man', says judge

A FORMER Army cadet instructor from Walsall who admitted a string of child sex offences has been spared a prison sentence.

James Moylan, aged 21, messaged young girls asking them for pictures of themselves, coaxing his victims on internet chat service MSN Messenger, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told last Thursday.

Judge Nicholas Webb called Moylan a "dirty young man", handing him a three-year supervision order.

Mr Lee Marklew, prosecuting, said one of the photographs Moylan had was of a girl whom he had contacted on Facebook.

She exposed his wrongdoings when he

accidentally sent her a text which was intended for someone else.

Moylan, of Borneo Street, Walsall, was arrested by West Midlands Police in May 2010, the court heard.

Computer

The design engineer admitted three charges of inciting a sexual act with a female under 16 and two counts of making indecent images of a child.

The charges from between November 2008 and March 2010 involved four girls, the court was told.

Judge Webb, sentencing, told Moylan after

hearing the facts of the case last Thursday: "These images were like trophies and you behaved like a dirty young man."

Moylan, a former sergeant instructor with the Army Cadet Force based in Oldbury, was also banned from working with children indefinitely.

He was ordered to take part in a community sex offender programme and will be on the sex offenders' register for the next five years.

He was ordered to pay £1,200 towards the costs of the prosecution and was told that the computer equipment from his home will be destroyed.



James Moylan, sex offender

Walsall primary schools hit top of Black Country class

WALSALL has climbed two places up the primary school league tables, delighting council education chiefs, and is now rated the best performing education body in the Black Country.

The borough was ranked 77 out of 152 local authorities across the country. Councillor Rachel Andrew, the council's cabinet member for children's services, said: "This is excellent news for Walsall."

"I'd like to pay warm congratulations to the whole school community."

"Pupils and staff have worked really hard and it's good that they are reaping their rewards."

"This is definitely an early Christmas present for everyone, and we're heading in the right direction."

Weakest

"We'll continue to invest and support to consolidate and improve for the future."

The results also see Walsall's pass rate ahead of the national average.

Three-quarters of children secured Level 4 and above in Key Stage Two for both English and mathematics compared with the national average of 74 per cent.

Lindens Primary School, Streetly, was top of the pile in the borough, with every

pupil attaining Level 4 in the two subjects. Headteacher Simon Griffiths said: "We are very proud and delighted all of the children have achieved their potential."

"It's down to excellent teaching and excellent support in school, by our parents and teaching staff."

St Peter's CofE Primary in Walsall was highlighted as the third most improved

Denise Paulonbridge, managing director of Children's Services Serco, said: "We are delighted to be the seventh most improved authority at Key Stage Two in the country and our youngsters continue to perform above the national average."

Schools Minister Nick Gibb promised that the Government would target the weakest primary schools in a bid to turn around "chronic under-performance".

Every child in 265 primary schools nationwide not only achieved at least the expected level in both English and maths, but also made the expected academic progress.

Church delight over £125,000 revamp



Fr Thomas James Walton and Margaret Hayes celebrate with committee members following the £125,000 revamp of St Francis of Assisi Church in Mill Road, Sheffield, Walsall

A WALSALL church has been given a £125,000 revamp.

A new roof, central heating, electrics, toilets and decorations have been put in place at St Francis of Assisi RC Church in Mill Road, Sheffield.

The Mill Road church was officially blessed by the Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham, David McGough, earlier this month.

Cash for the revamp was handed over by Walsall-based The Highfield

South Trust, which funded the revamp through Cory Environmental.

The group has taken on other projects in the Sheffield area of the borough.

Trustees

Most recently, £29,000-worth of work was completed at Sheffield Methodist Church.

Speaking at the blessing of St Francis of Assisi Church, the bishop

said the archdiocese of Birmingham, the parish priest Father Thomas Walton and the parishioners were grateful for the money.

"Without the help of the trust the refurbishment would not have been possible," he said.

A cheque presentation was made to Father Thomas by Margaret Hayes, who chairs the Highfield South Trust and fellow trustees.

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Protest over £1m refurb for borough civic centre

Runners put in pud time



Katrina Wyke, Cathryn Jones, Melanie Brown and Helen Hurst



The start of the Christmas pudding run at Bloxwich

MORE than 500 runners took the streets of Bloxwich to take part in the annual Christmas pudding run.

The 10-mile run was organised by the Sneyd Striders running club.

The race started at the former Sneyd Community School, where the club is based. Some participants donned fancy dress but other stuck

to their traditional running gear to complete the race in the wind and chilly weather.

Club treasurer Richard Johnson said: "It is always a good race, and lots of people like to take part. Each runner who completed the run received a Christmas pudding in their goody bag."

MORE than £1 million is to be spent revamping Walsall Council House and the Civic Centre in the next two years.

The money has been earmarked in the cash-strapped local authority's draft budget statement and will be used to "improve the customer experience".

The reception area at the Grade II Listed building in Lichfield Street will be remodelled, while the mosaic floor and historic stonework are also set to get work.

Willenhall South Labour member Councillor Carl Creaney said: "That is a heck of a lot of money to spend when they are making a lot of cuts."

"The building seems fine to me. Unless this is urgent repair work, it does seem like a lot."

Bosses said the plans would "enhance the appeal and reputation" of the building but critics have hit out at the expenditure at a time when the authority is cutting jobs.

Councillor Adrian Andrew, cabinet member for regeneration and deputy council leader, said: "This is the next phase in the exciting regeneration of council buildings."

Reception

"We want to give all our customers who visit council premises an experience they will enjoy and remember. Work is already being done to reinvigorate the Civic Centre and the library building and the feedback on both has been very positive."

"We aim to remodel the reception area at the council house to create an impressive and welcoming environment."

"This will include restoring the mosaic floor and historic stonework on the outside of the building and further enhance the appeal and reputation of our historic Council House."

Around £330,000 is being earmarked for the work in 2012-13, with a further £700,000 to be spent in 2013-14.

Plans include remodelling parts of the ground floor of the town hall to enable more public use of the town hall complex.

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To make an appointment, or for more details about Walsall PACE, please contact Sport & Leisure Development Services on 01902 605500.



Walsall Council



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Our website is regularly viewed by tens of thousands of local people each month as it contains all people need to find locally. This includes the most recommended businesses in Walsall, testimonials from local people, money savings offers, events, and information about what is going on in Walsall.

Below are just a few of our recommended businesses. To find out more about them and other local gems visit www.thebestof.co.uk/walsall

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LETTERS

Cuts bite too deep and too quickly

THIS is a really worrying time for families and businesses, struggling with higher food prices and gas bills and worried about their jobs and their children's futures.

The Tory-led Government are cutting too far and too fast and risk choking off economic recovery. Unemployment is currently at its highest level in 17 years.

One in five young people are out of work and more women are unemployed than at any time since 1988.

There is another way. Labour has set out a clear five-point plan for jobs, to help struggling families and support small businesses – I hope you will join their calls for change.

WORRIED
Willenhall

Fill your boots, parking warden

SOME disability badge holders flaunt regulations by passing badges around family and friends. Misuse incurs a penalty of up to £1,000 and withdrawal of the badge from the holder.

If parking wardens concentrated their attention upon blue badge abusers, income would rapidly escalate and free up disability bays for genuine users.

As a genuinely disabled person, I say get out there wardens, and fill your boots.

ALAN V HARRISON
Great Wyrley

I'm a victim, but it's not a crime

MY IDENTITY was stolen by fraudsters who then ordered several hundred pounds-worth of goods from two mail order firms; the items to be delivered to another address in the West Midlands.

My mail was then intercepted to prevent monthly accounts reaching me, and one letter opened, but somehow reaching my address and revealing all.

A simple case to investigate, you might imagine. The address to which the goods were delivered – that would seem to me to be a good starting point, at least.

Top party laid on by two great PCSOs

WE WOULD like to say a very big thankyou to our PCSOs Suki Lally and Helen Fenton from the Willenhall beat team, for all the hard work and effort they put in to organise a Christmas party for some 50 local people, some of whom had been victims of crime during the last year.

The buffet was fantastic, as was the entertainment provided by Beacon Primary School choir, singing carols; also Willenhall Sports College – fantastic singing by two young men and a very good dance troupe.

Thanks to everyone who gave up their time to make this a very enjoyable afternoon.

Carole PERKINS
Dorchester Road
Willenhall
Tom HUTCHINSON
Dorchester Road
Willenhall

The local police at Walsall required to record the crimes were unimpressed. The loss of the goods must be reported by the mail order firms.

I could not establish where the mail interception occurred and the opened mail – well, it may not have been at the local sorting office.

Repeated requests to record the crimes failed: the issue of a 'log' number was a record of the call, but not to record the crimes committed.

Apart from the obvious opportunity to arrest the fraudsters, how can local communities have any confidence in the integrity of published crime

figures compiled from police records when every effort seems designed to prevent such matters being recorded?

No further interest is shown by the local cops. My burden, endless calls to the mail order companies and the credit reference agencies to clear my name from something the police do not even record as 'crime'.

Strange practices by our public servants these days. Wait for the next round of press releases extolling the reduction in crime levels!

D. BAKER
Walsall

thechronicle

LETTERS to the Editor

POST

Walsall Chronicle, Chronicle
Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street,
Wolverhampton
WV1 1ES

E-MAIL

walsallchronicle@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

High-speed service has limited benefit

REGARDING the "benefits" of HS2, one of the last things that Birmingham needs is to be "moved into London's commuter belt". It will not benefit the West Midlands economy. Birmingham will become just another dormitory suburb with consumer spending sucked to London.

It may increase house prices in some areas, that is all. One of the recognised weaknesses of England's economic and transport structure is that it is too London-centric. HS2 will just make this worse. If capacity on existing lines is at capacity, which I doubt as a regular traveller, then resources need to be spent on increasing this capacity along exists rail corridors – much cheaper than a new line through rural land.

Finally, the only way to have more goods moved by rail rather than road is for there to be high road taxes and tolls on lorries and trucks. Just providing more rail freight capacity will not make this happen without such pro-active targeted Government policies.

RUSSELL ARMITAGE
Manorhouse Close
Walsall

Thankyou for Poppy Appeal donations

IN DAYS when people are facing financial problems, anyone engaged in collecting for good causes has to be grateful for the generosity of the British people.

This year the Poppy Appeal organisers in Darlaston have been amazed at the overwhelming generosity of the people of Darlaston, Mosley and Bentley as this year's appeal has raised £12,363.95.

This is for more than we could have expected, so many thanks to those who support the appeal by distributing cans and poppy trays, who stand on a daily basis doing the street collection, the shops, pubs and schools who support the appeal but above all the generous people of the town.

J JOHNSON
Poppy Appeal
organiser
Darlaston

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CLUB NEWS

Party pledge for hospital donation



A group of Sedgley Evening Guild's arts and crafts section wrapped in the blankets knitted for the Addis Ababa Hospital

THE arts and crafts group is continuing knitting blankets to donate to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, along with producing other craft items, and members had a very successful open day recently.

The guild also had a very good Christmas party with delicious food supplied by all the members.

SEDGLEY EVENING GUILD

The walking group is still enjoying its walks around the local countryside, especially during the recent good autumn weather.

The next meeting will be in January when the group meets on the third Monday at 7.15pm at Sedgley Community Centre.

Festive fare for members

CHAIRMAN Brenda White opened the meeting by welcomed all members of Walsall Central Townswomen's Guild to the Christmas session.

Brenda then dealt with the business part before introducing the guild choir and drama groups.

Mince pies baked by the chairman were eaten while

WALSALL CENTRAL TOWNSWOMEN

everyone enjoyed a cup of tea and members said it was a delicious treat before the evening entertainment, including community carol

singing started.

New year activities for the WCTG, weather permitting, will start off with a meeting on Tuesday, January 3, details to be arranged later.

This will be held at Central Hall Methodist Church in the Mellish Room, starting at 7pm. All members and friends will be very welcome.

thechronicle

Christmas charity at meeting

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL W'TON

WOLVERHAMPTON club members gathered for their Christmas meeting recently. As keen supporters of The Haven, the Women and Children's Refuge in Wolverhampton, members are encouraged to bring along gifts for the children and their mothers who the Haven is supporting. This year was no exception and a great number of presents were brought along.

A member of the Haven staff, Grace Lee attended the meeting to collect the items and thanked members very warmly for their generosity. As well as gift for the Haven, members brought along tinned goods, socks and blankets for passing on to the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd Ministry in Wolverhampton provides food on a daily basis for those who are hungry.

The Little Brothers also has a drop-in centre providing for the needs of any disadvantaged or lonely people looking for support.

In addition, the Ministry distributes around 1,500 Christmas hampers each year for families in need in Wolverhampton and the surrounding areas.

The evening included some popular entertainment - ukulele playing and singing by Matthew Richards.

President Julia brought the evening to a close.

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The rear of St Giles' Church, Willenhall, in about 1865



The Brownhills Fingerpost in the 1920s



Cyclists on pennyfarthings in King Street, Darlaston, photographed from the Bull Stake in about 1874

Out with the old - and in with many more photos

THIS feature marks the end of one era, and the beginning of another.

The Chronicle newspaper series is evolving, and this means that after 11 years of continuous publication our monthly Local Heritage series now becomes Memory Lane to fit in with that evolution. The format is different, combining more pictures with less text.

In the coming year I'm revisiting the history of towns and villages across the borough, using local sources and showcasing some of the most interesting photographs from the collections of Walsall Local History Centre.

In 1895, HG Wells wrote *The Time Machine*, a seminal story whose ideas have become part of the fabric of modern society despite the fact that we still have no idea of how to build such a device. In a sense, though, we already have a time machine – the camera.

MEMORY LANE

By Stuart Williams

Since the early 1800s, photography has enabled us to freeze literally billions of moments in time with the click of a shutter.

The earliest local photographs date back to the 1860s.

One great example of early Walsall photography is a picture of the original Wheatsheaf pub in Bloxwich with one of the first policemen – a 'Peeler'; another, another shows penny farthing bicycles being ridden down King

Street, Darlaston; the Brownhills Fingerpost dates from 1777 and stood at the junction of Chester Road and Watling Street. It's now in the Staffordshire Museum at Shugborough.

These and many thousands of other photographs, right up to the present day, reflect the architectural, structural and social changes we see in our towns and villages, as well as changes in culture, technology and fashion.

Since I started writing Local Heritage for the Chronicle in 2001, there have been huge changes, not least in photography – back then almost all cameras used film, and today the majority are digital.

This month's feature then is something of a preview of next year's 'photographic time machine trip' to come.

Prints of pictures in this feature and many others are available to purchase by special order from Walsall Local History Centre, which is part of Walsall Council. For local and family history, drop into the centre in Essex Street, visit www.walsall.gov.uk/localhistorycentre or call 01922 721305.



Publican William Purchase and a 'Peeler' outside the Wheatsheaf, Field Road, Bloxwich, in about 1861



The Royal Oak pub, Ablewell Street, Walsall, 1924



Elm Cottage, Church Road, Pelsall, in about 1901

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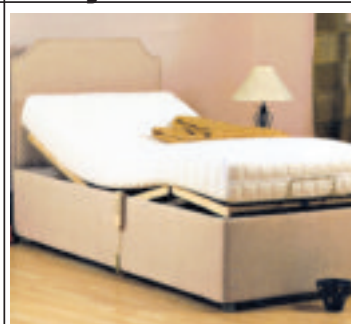
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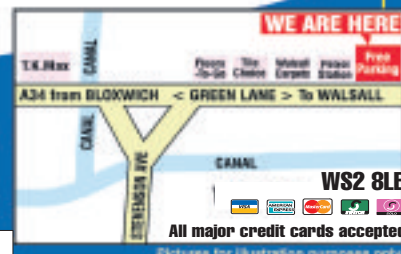
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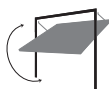
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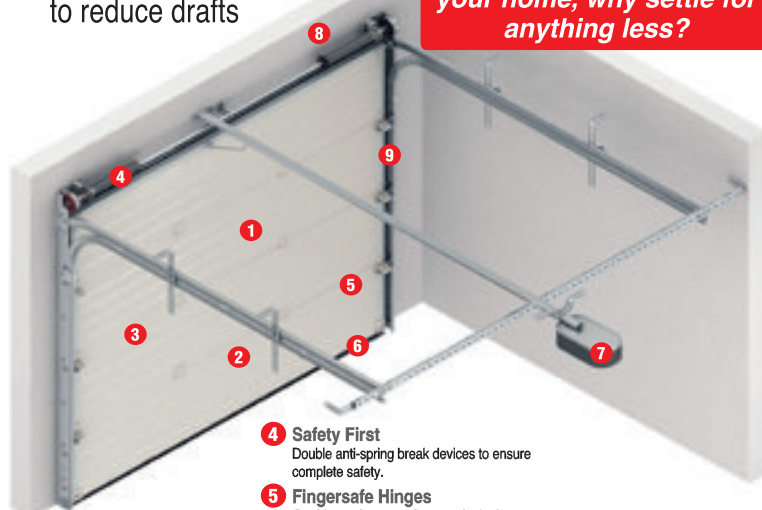
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6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** The Nativity. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.15** Nigel Slater's Simple Christmas. (R) **12.15** BBC News: Regional News; Weather. **12.30** Keeping Up Appearances. (R) **1.30** Film: The Santa Clause 2. (2002) Disney comedy adventure sequel, starring Tim Allen. **3.05** Film: G-Force. (2009) Premiere. Children's adventure, starring Bill Nighy. **4.30** BBC News: Regional News; Weather. **4.50** Winter Wipeout Christmas Special. **5.50** Film: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. (2005) Fantasy adventure, starring Tilda Swinton.

8.00 **Merlin**. Part two of two. Camelot has fallen to Morgana, leaving Arthur a broken man, and Merlin realises only an extraordinary act will restore his master's faith. Last in the series.

8.45 **EastEnders**. Masood and Zainab try to stop Yusuf's plan.

9.20 **Outnumbered**. The Brockmans plan to escape the festivities to spend Christmas in the sun – but Grandad ends up in hospital. Karen gets toothache and Ben develops a fascination with knives.

10.00 **Lapland**. Festive comedy drama, starring Sue Johnston.

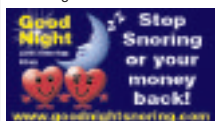
11.15 **The National Lottery Saturday Night Draws**.

11.25 BBC News; Weather.

11.45 **Midnight Mass from St George's Cathedral Southwark**. Led by Archbishop Peter Smith; National Lottery Update.

12.55 Film: At First Sight. (1999) Romantic drama, starring Val Kilmer and Mira Sorvino. **2.55** Weatherview. **3.00** BBC News.

6.00 CBeebies. **7.00** CBBC. **8.50** Film: Jump In! (2007) Drama, starring Corbin Bleu. **10.10** Film: Bicentennial Man. (1999) Sci-fi drama, with Robin Williams. **12.10** Film: Homeward Bound II: Lost in San Francisco. (1996) Animal adventure sequel, with the voice of Michael J Fox. **1.35** Pappano's Essential Tosca. **2.35** Tosca from the Royal Opera House. **4.45** Christmas University Challenge. **5.15** Dad's Army. (R) **5.45** Carols from King's.



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7.00 **The John Craven Years**. Documentary charting the TV presenter's career, which has spanned 40 years. Featuring interviews with Jon Culshaw, Noel Edmonds and Martin Bell.

8.00 **Morecambe and Wise**. Memorable moments from the comedy duo's Christmas shows. (R)

9.00 **The Many Faces of Les Dawson**. Profile of the Manchester-born comedian.

10.00 **The Best of Les Dawson**. Tribute to the comedian. (R)

10.25 **Top of the Pops 2: Christmas Special**. (R)

11.55 **Blackadder Rides Again**. (R)

12.55 **Never Mind the Buzzcocks**. (R) **1.25** Film: Holiday in Handcuffs. (2007) Romantic comedy, starring Melissa Joan Hart and Mario Lopez. **2.50** Close.

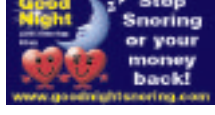
6.00 CITV: Mini CITV. **7.25** CITV. **8.15** Film: Tom and Jerry: The Magic Ring. (2002) Premiere. Animated comedy, with the voice of Jeff Bennett. **9.25** Film: Santa Claus: The Movie. (1985) Family fantasy adventure, with Dudley Moore. **11.30** Coronation Street. **1.25** ITV News; Weather. **1.45** Film: The Polar Express. (2004) Animated adventure, with the voice of Tom Hanks. **3.35** Film: ET: The Extra-Terrestrial. (1982) Sci-fi fantasy, with Henry Thomas. **5.45** ITV News; Weather.

6.00 **You've Been Framed! Christmas Special**. Festive four-ups. (R)

6.30 **The Cube Celebrity Special**. With Coronation Street stars Ryan Thomas and Julie Hesmondhalgh.

7.30 **Text Santa**. Part two of two. The charity initiative concludes.

10.00 **Piers Morgan's Life Stories: Donny Osmond**. The singer talks about his life and career.



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11.00 ITV News; Weather. **11.15** Carols from Bucklebury.

12.15 Film: Connie and Carla. (2004) Two women flee after witnessing a murder and plan to lie low by posing as drag queens on the Los Angeles gay scene. Comedy, starring Toni Collette and Nia Vardalos; ITV News Headlines. **2.10** Film: Spartacus. (1960) Roman epic, with Kirk Douglas. **5.20** ITV Nightscreen.

7.15 Film: Garfield. (2004) Family comedy, with the voice of Bill Murray. **8.45** Olive, the Other Reindeer. (R) **9.40** Prep & Landing. (R) **10.10** Film: Charlotte's Web. (2006) Family drama, with the voice of Julia Roberts. **12.00** Film: The Muppet Christmas Carol. (1992) Comedy, with Michael Caine and Steven Mackintosh alongside the puppet characters. **1.40** Gordon's Christmas Cookalong – Get Ready. (R) **1.50** Jamie's Christmas with Bells On. (R) **2.55** Jamie's Christmas with Bells On. (R) **4.00** Deal or No Deal: Deal Panto. **5.00** Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R) **5.30** Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R) **7.00** Channel 4 News. **7.05** 4thought.tv.

6.00 **Come Dine with Me Extra Portions**. (R)

6.30 **Come Dine with Me Extra Portions**. (R)

7.00 Channel 4 News. **7.05** 4thought.tv.

7.15 **FILM: Hairspray**. (2007) **9.20** **Home for the Holidays**. **10.55** **Bill Bailey: Dandelion Mind**. **11.55** **Father Ted Christmas Special**. (R)

1.05 Music on 4: Inputoutput. (R) **1.15** Comedy Lab: Kabaddases. **1.45** Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows – T4 Movie Special. (R) **2.00** Cee Lo Takes the UK: Christmas with All the Goodies. (R) **2.10** Film: Ashes of Time Redux. (1994) Wong Kar-Wai's drama, starring Leslie Cheung. **3.45** Southland. **4.30** World War II: The Last Heroes. (R) **5.25** Brothers & Sisters. (R)

6.00 Milkshake! **10.15** Chef Donald. (R) **10.20** ThunderCats. **10.55** Meerkat Manor. (R) **11.25** Ice Road Truckers: Deadliest Roads. (R) **12.25** Charley Boorman's Extreme Frontiers. (R) **1.30** Cars Toons. **1.35** Film: Mrs Miracle. (2009) **3.25** Film: Meet the Santas. (2005) Fantasy comedy sequel, with Steve Guttenberg. **5.05** Film: Scrooge – A Christmas Carol. (1951) Charles Dickens' fantasy, starring Alastair Sim.

7.00 **Eddie Stobart's Christmas Delivery**. Festive edition of the documentary series, in which the company's truckers battle winter conditions to ensure shops and councils receive their supply of Christmas trees and salt.

7.55 5 News Weekend. **8.00** **The Gadget Show**. Christmas Eve Special. Suz Perry investigates 4G communications, Jason Bradbury examines products due to hit the shops in 2012, and Jon Bentley views an advanced helmet designed for fighter-jet pilots.

9.00 **Greatest Christmas TV Moments**. Countdown of 50 Christmas TV crackers, featuring Gavin & Stacey, Morecambe and Wise, Only Fools and Horses, Wallace and Gromit, Doctor Who, Top of the Pops and The Royle Family.

12.00 SuperCasino. **4.00** Great Artists. (R) **4.25** Divine Designs. (R) **4.50** Rough Guide to Beaches. **5.00** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.10** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.35** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.45** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

ITV2
3.15 Aladdin **4.45** Jack and the Beanstalk **6.15** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **8.00** Film: Nanny McPhee (2005) **10.00** Celebrity Juice: Christmas Special **11.00** Film: The Bourne Identity (2002)

ITV3
2.35 A Christmas Carol **4.05** Christmas Lights **5.30** The Darling Buds of May **6.45** Agatha Christie's Poirot **9.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **11.00** Film: Santa Claus: The Movie (1985)

ITV4
4.00 Film: The 'Burbs (1989) **6.00** Film: Dragnet (1987) **8.10** Film: Jaws: The Revenge (1987) **10.00** Film: Demolition Man (1993)

BBC THREE
7.00 Great Movie Mistakes 2011: Not in 3D **8.00** Top Gear **9.20** Film: Son of Rambow (2008) **10.50** EastEnders **11.20** Family Guy

BBC FOUR
7.00 Timeshift: The Golden Age of Trams – A Streetcar Named Desire. A history of trams in Britain, exploring why they became popular in cities and towns at the start of the 20th century – and discovering why some areas have reintroduced them. **8.00** The Pharaoh Who Conquered the Sea **9.00** Film: Land of the Pharaohs (1955) **10.40** Timeshift: Epic – A Cast of Thousands! **11.40** The Doris Day Special

E4
3.35 Sorority Girls **4.40** Desperate Housewives **5.40** Scrubs **6.35** The Big Bang Theory **8.00** How I Met Your Mother **8.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** The World's Greatest Bankster **11.05** Film: Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan (2006)

FILM4
3.25 The Thirty-Nine Steps (1959) **5.15** My Neighbour Totoro (1988) **7.00** The Spiderwick Chronicles (2008) **9.00** Star Trek (2009) **11.20** Bronson (2008)

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6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** The Nativity. (R) **10.00** Christmas Day Eucharist from Lichfield Cathedral. **11.00** Songs of Praise - Christmas Day Big Sing. **11.40** Morecambe and Wise. (R) **12.25** BBC News: Weather. **12.35** Film: Kung Fu Panda. (2008) Animated comedy, with the voice of Jack Black. **2.00** Top of the Pops Christmas 2011. **3.00** The Queen. (2009) Premiere. Animated sci-fi comedy, with the voice of Reese Witherspoon. **4.35** BBC News: Weather. **4.50** Film: Ratatouille. (2007) Premiere. Pixar animated comedy, with the voice of Patton Oswalt.

6.30 The Gruffalo's Child. **7.00** Doctor Who. The Time Lord helps a wartime widow and her children realise their dreams.

8.00 Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special 2011. With Barry McGuigan, Su Pollard, Simon Webbe, Debra Stephenson and Charlie Brooks.

9.00 EastEnders. Hour-long episode. Masood sets out to bring Kamil home, but Yusef has one more trick to play. Shirley is shocked to discover the identity of Phil's stalker.

10.00 Absolutely Fabulous. **10.30** Michael McIntyre's Christmas Comedy Roadshow.

11.30 BBC News: Weather. **11.45** On Christmas Night. **11.50** Have I Got a Bit More News for You. (R)

12.30 The Graham Norton Show Christmas Special. (R) **1.35** Film: The Hot Chick. (2002) Body-swap comedy, starring Rob Schneider. **3.10** Weatherview. **3.15** BBC News.

6.00 CBeebies. **7.10** CBBC. **9.35** Film: The Magic Roundabout. (2005) Animated adventure, with the voice of Ian McKellen. **10.50** Film: The Sword in the Stone. (1963) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Ricky Sorenson. **12.10** Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. (R) **2.10** A Musical Nativity with John Rutter. **3.10** The Prince and the Composer.

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(R) **4.40** Dad's Army. (R) **5.10** Porridge. (R) **5.50** The Queen. Her Majesty's annual address to the nation and the Commonwealth. (R)

6.00 Christmas University Challenge. The first semi-final of the festive quiz.

6.30 Darcy Russell Dances Hollywood. The former Royal Ballet star celebrates classic dance musicals.

8.00 Blackadder the Third. The new prime minister plots to bankrupt the Prince Regent. (R)

8.30 Blackadder the Third. Edmund falls foul of Dr Johnson. (R)

9.00 The Toys That Made Christmas. A look back at playthings of the past.

10.30 James May's Man Lab Xmas Special. (R)

11.30 Victoria Wood with All the Trimmings. (R)

12.25 The Many Faces of Les Dawson. (R) **1.25** QI. (R) **1.55** Film: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt. (1956) **3.15** Close.

6.00 CITV: Mini CITV. **7.25** CITV. **7.45** Film: The Borrowers. (1997) Children's fantasy, starring John Goodman. **9.25** Film: March of the Penguins. (2005) Oscar-winning nature documentary, narrated by Morgan Freeman. **11.00** Film: Miracle on 34th Street. (1994) Christmas family drama remake, with Richard Attenborough. **1.05** ITV News: Weather. **1.15** Film: Aladdin. (1992) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Robin Williams. **3.00** The Queen. **3.10** Film: Happy Feet. (2006) Animated adventure, with the voice of Elijah Wood. **5.10** ITV News: Weather. **5.30** New You've Been Framed!

6.00 Emmerdale. Hour-long episode. Amy makes a decision about Kyle's future.

7.00 All Star Family Fortunes Christmas Special.

8.00 Coronation Street. **9.00** Downton Abbey. Violet has concerns about Rosamund's new suitor (guest star Nigel Havers).

11.05 ITV News: Weather. **11.20** Benidorm. (R)

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12.35 The Comedy Annual. Comedians talk about the key moments of 2011. (R) **1.35** Film: The Towering Inferno. (1974) Disaster movie, starring Paul Newman and Steve McQueen; ITV News Headlines. **4.20** Kojak. (R) **5.15** ITV News: Weather. **5.55** ITV Morning News.

6.10 Film: The Ugly Duckling and Me. (2006) Premiere. Animated comedy, with the voice of Morgan C Jones. **7.40** The Simpsons. (R) **8.00** The Simpsons. (R) **8.30** Film: James and the Giant Peach. (1996) Children's fantasy, with Paul Terry. **10.00** Gordon's Christmas Cookalong Live. **2.00** Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas. **2.30** The Snowman. (R) **3.00** Celebrity Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.05** Channel 4 News. **4.10** 4thought.tv. **4.15** The Alternative Christmas Message. **4.20** Deal or No Deal: Deal Part 2. **5.20** Film: Big. (1988) A boy is magically transported into the body of a 30-year-old man and applies his childlike brain to the problems of adult life. Comedy, starring Tom Hanks and Elizabeth Perkins.

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7.15 FILM: Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs. (2009) Animated adventure sequel, with the voice of John Leguizamo.

9.00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special. With Ruth Jones, David Walliams, Jedward and Steps.

10.00 Rude Tube: Epic Christmas. Alex Zane presents the 50 greatest festive internet videos.

11.05 So This Is Christmas.

12.05 8 Out of 10 Cats Christmas Special. **1.05** American Football Live. **4.45** Brief Encounters of the Sporting Mind: Rally Driving. (R) **4.50** Post Modern Pastimes. (R) **5.00** Road to London 2012: That Paralympic Show. (R) **5.25** Scrapheap Challenge. (R)

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Fifi and the Flowerlots. (R) **6.15** Fireman Sam Christmas Special. (R) **6.35** Castle Farm. **6.45** Igan Ogam. (R) **6.55** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.00** The Milkshake! Show. **7.25** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.35** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **7.45** Little Princess. (R) **8.05** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **8.10** Angelina Ballerina. **8.25** Rupert Bear. (R) **8.45** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.00** Film: Mist: The Tale of a Sheepdog Puppy. (2006) Live-action animal adventure, featuring the voice of Mel Giedroyc. **10.30** Trailer Horn. **10.35** Animal Rescue Squad. (R) **10.55** Andre Rieu's Christmas Spectacular. **11.55** Ice Road Truckers. (R) **12.55** Ice Road Truckers. (R) **1.55** Cars - Unidentified Flying Matter. **2.00** Film: Mrs Miracle 2: Miracle in Manhattan. (2010) Family drama sequel, starring Doris Roberts. **3.45** Film: Mrs Santa Claus. (1996) Period musical, starring Angela Lansbury. **5.30** Film: The Santa Suit. (2010) Premiere. Comedy, starring Kevin Sorbo and Jodie Dowdall.

7.25 FILM: The Christmas Card. (2006) Romantic drama, starring John Newton and Alice Evans.

9.05 Eddie Stobart's Christmas Delivery. Festive edition of the documentary series. (R)

10.00 Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs. Festive music countdown.

1.00 SuperCasino. **3.55** Meals in Moments. (R) **4.05** Nick's Quest. (R) **4.30** Divine Designs. (R) **5.00** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.10** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.35** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.45** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

ITV2
3.00 The Xtra Factor: Louis' Best and Worst
4.00 The Xtra Factor: Tulisa's Best and Worst
5.00 The Xtra Factor: Kelly's Best and Worst
6.00 The Xtra Factor: Gary's Best and Worst
7.00 Film: Jack Frost (1998) **9.00** Film: The Bourne Supremacy (2004) **11.05** Celebrity Juice: Christmas Special

ITV3
3.20 Film: Carry On Cowboy (1966) **5.20** Film: Carry On Cleo (1964) **7.10** Film: Carry On Camping (1969) **9.00** Film: Carry On Up the Jungle (1970) **10.55** Film: Carry On Jack (1963)

ITV4
2.25 Film: Night Passage (1957) **4.15** Film: Spartacus (1960) **8.00** Film: The Magnificent Seven Ride! (1972) **10.00** Film: Rocky (1976) Oscar-winning boxing drama, starring Sylvester Stallone.

BBC THREE
7.00 Great Movie Mistakes 2011: Not in 3D
8.00 Film: Armageddon (1998) **10.20** Russell Howard's Good News Extra **11.05** EastEnders

BBC FOUR
7.00 Film: El Cid (1961) **9.50** The Johnny Cash TV Show: Country Gold **10.50** Top of the Pops 1976: Christmas Day Special **11.40** Top of the Pops 1976 Christmas Special

E4
2.45 Film: Jingle All the Way (1996) **4.30** Film: Annie (1982) **7.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.55** Film: Independence Day (1996) **10.40** The Big Bang Theory **11.40** Tool Academy

FILM4
3.20 Miracle on 34th Street (1947) **5.10** Ponyo (2008) **7.15** The Ladykillers (1955). A criminal and his gang meet their match when an elderly landlady unknowingly thwarts their attempts to kill her. Ealing comedy, with Alec Guinness. **9.00** Juno (2007). Comedy, starring Ellen Page. **10.50** Watchmen (2009) Comic-book drama, starring Patrick Wilson.

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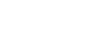
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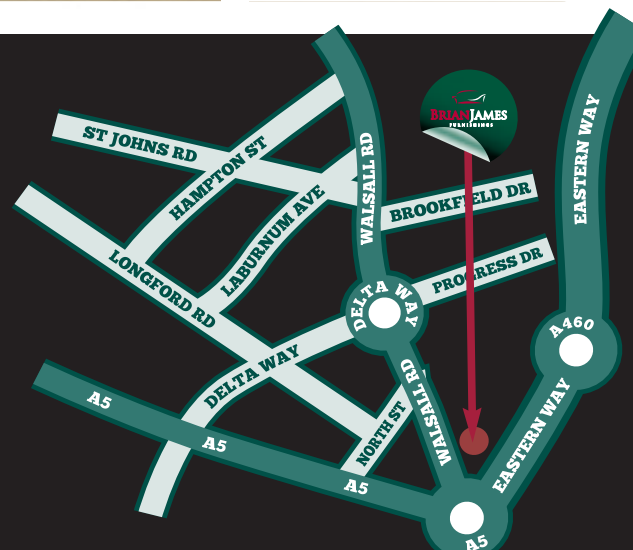
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Your essential guide to the world of motoring compiled by Motoring Editor Sharon Walters

Sky's the limit for this remarkable new Mazda

TO BE FAIR to Mazda, the company doesn't have the resources of the Toyotas and Volkswagens of this world.

But its engineers put a lot more emphasis on cars as things to be passionate about, and that's the thinking behind the new CX-5 compact SUV.

The automotive world has seen precious little innovation from Mazda over the last couple of years, but now we know why.

Its boffins have been working on quite a lot of different technologies, all bundled together under the banner of SkyActiv.

Weight-saving measures, new engines and construction techniques unique to cars are all part of what amounts to a giant leap forward for the company in terms of satisfying the ever-increasing list of demands that consumers are asking of car-makers.

The CX-5 is destined to arrive properly

By Matt Kimberley

next April, but I had a chance to take a sneak peek in deepest, darkest Italy, where I drove a selection of pre-production models.

The really pleasing thing is that Mazda has made just as much of a fuss about the pursuit of great driving dynamics as it has about the search for greater efficiency, even though the most innovative advances have come in the latter field.

Everyone at the company still believes cars should be fun, and that's brilliant.

Two new engines have been developed from the ground up, incorporating every advanced piece of design that Mazda could come up with.

Remarkable

The lightweight petrol engine has the highest compression ratio of any petrol-engined mass-produced car in the world.

The diesel, on the other hand, is even more remarkable. Using two turbochargers, one small and one large, turbo lag is minimised while still allowing for large power outputs.

But it's an astonishing level of attention to detail that has eliminated or minimised lots of different areas of wasted energy to create a 2.2-litre diesel engine that produces 148bhp, 280lb.ft – both big numbers – and just 119g/km of CO2. That makes it all of £30

to tax under the current system – and it's a pretty big engine.

As remarkable as it is on paper, the engine feels every bit as good in use. It pulls hard and is smooth and quiet, making barely a whisper at a fast cruise.

At around 70mph on smooth asphalt it's remarkably hushed, with the only intrusive road noise coming from the rear wheel arches. Arguably they could do with more soundproofing.

Mazda has also retuned the necessary control inputs for this car, making it more directly responsive to how the driver is operating the pedals and steering wheel.

Whereas a lot of cars – older Mazdas included – provide maximum power at only a fraction of full throttle pressure to make their engines seem more potent than they are, the CX-5 offers a little more respect.

The harder you push the pedal, the quicker you'll go. Acceleration is smoother, and it helps fuel economy as a result.

As a compact SUV, the CX-5 is reasonably tall, with a high driving position that has been optimised to feel as comfortable as possible.

The diagrams to explain all this are quite something, but suffice it to say that the CX-5 has one of the most comfortable and most effective driving positions in the class.

From the driver's seat you can also enjoy the gear change. Inspired by the

wonderful MX-5, the 'throw' has been shortened and the shifts have been made more positive than in old designs, so it really feels like a sporty car rather than a small soft-roader.

This sort of attitude to design creates the simple joy of driving, where the car surpasses any status as merely a tool and becomes something you can find pleasure in; something that makes you smile. It's a dying art but Mazda has recaptured it in the CX-5.

As pre-production cars, the interior quality is... let's say, unfinished. Fortunately Mazda had provided a display-only car with a fully fin-

ished interior to poke around. Its design isn't as exciting as the technology behind it, but it's inoffensive and stylish enough.

The CX-5 is the first Mazda to bring together all the SkyActiv technologies into one car, and the results are pretty dramatic.

To combine genuine driving enjoyment with cheap running costs and a high seating position in this sector of the market is a remarkable achievement, and the finished article promises great things.



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Wood hit by a late strike in each half

A GOAL late in each half gave Pilkington XXX a 2-0 win over Walsall Wood in the Midland Combination Premier Division.

On 16 minutes Wood's Lewis Taylor Boyce got away from Gareth Davis who pulled him back just outside the box.

It should have been a red card but the referee gave a yellow much to the amazement of everyone. The free-kick was driven into the wall.

A Davis ball over the top found Morgan in acres of space but visiting keeper Adam Braddock raced off his line to make a great save.

After 44 minutes Aiden Swann won the ball in the middle of the field and fed Prescod wide on the right, he cut inside and fired into the roof of the net.

With the watch showing time, Prescod raced in from the right and his thunderbolt brought a stunning save from Braddock.

The first effort of the second half saw Morgan fire into the side netting before Taylor Boyce was foiled by a great save from Leech.

In the third minute of injury time Mally hit a screamer to seal the win.

Star held to home draw

CONTINENTAL STAR bounced back from a poor result the previous week with a 2-2 draw against Nuneaton Griff at a wet and muddy Dales Lane.

Both teams cancelled each other out in the first half of this Midland Combination Premier Division clash.

Continental took the lead on 48 minutes when in-form striker Daniel Holdgate volleyed home for his 28th goal in 18 games.

On 57 minutes midfielder Ibrahim Benjaflin picked the ball up inside the Griff half before cutting inside and rounding the keeper for a brilliant solo goal.

Griff were given a lifeline six minutes later following a corner from Dave Barnett which was deflected into his own net by Tony Green.

On 88 minutes substitute Henry Tord tucked the ball home for the equaliser.

Star now take a break for Christmas with their next match a local derby at Bloxwich United on December 31.



Will Grigg gives chase for the Saddlers during the 1-1 draw at Chesterfield



Walsall's Richard Taundry gets a foot in to win possession from Scott Griffiths

Two points lost by sad Saddlers

Chesterfield 1 Walsall 1

THERE was little festive cheer to be found in the Walsall camp after a game that will be considered as two points lost.

Alex Nicholls gave the Saddlers the lead with a clinical 29th-minute strike and that looked as if it would be enough until Jack Lester popped up with an equaliser in the final minute of normal time.

It was a bitter blow for the visitors, who trooped off despondently after they appeared to have weathered a second-half siege from The Spireites only for their effort to unravel at the end.

Victory for Walsall would have been just their second in 16 league games, a run stretching back to August 27.

But it wasn't to be, and they must now pick themselves up for a period over Christmas and the New Year that will dictate how the rest of the season will run.

Dean Smith had to field a re-jigged back four after injuries to Oliver Lancashire and Manny Smith ruled them out.

But the Saddlers' rearguard looked solid throughout, albeit after a shaky start when Craig Westcarr tested Jimmy Walker's reflexes inside the first minute.

Walsall soon settled down and their obstinacy had the home fans booing and jeering their own team as they failed to break down their opponents in a tense opening period.

At the other end, Jon Macken fired agonisingly wide after good work from Anton Peterlin and Jamie Paterson before Nicholls coolly notched his fifth goal of the season.

Peterlin was again the creator and Nicholls slotted his well-timed crossfield ball past keeper Tommy Lee to put Walsall in the ascendancy.

In truth, Walsall were looking quite comfortable, but their confidence is brittle and John Sheridan's men began to apply the pressure in the remaining 15 minutes of the half.



Alex Nicholls wheels away after scoring for Walsall past Tommy Lee



Nicholls smacks in the Walsall goal at Chesterfield

Westcarr saw a powerful effort well blocked by Andy Butler, and he then fired the rebound over the bar from a tight angle.

The former Notts County striker was denied by Walker again in the final minute of the half, and yet again four minutes after the re-start.

Dean Morgan and Scott Griffiths also tested the strength of Walsall's right flank but Richard Taundry, Darryl Westlake and Lee Beevers did well to contain them in the first half in particular.

Had they continued to play in the same vein in the second, they may well have been celebrating at the final whistle.

But after the interval they began to sit deeper and deeper as the home side pumped crosses into their box at will. They were becoming hemmed in their own half, with

Macken and Nicholls increasingly isolated. Smith replaced the former with Will Grigg with 27 minutes left but it wasn't enough to stem the tide.

Westcarr and Alex Mendy both failed to convert decent chances, though, and when Danny Whitaker's thumping long-range drive crashed off the bar, it looked like Walsall's luck was finally going to hold.

But the Saddlers have let slip 15 points from winning positions this season – an unenviable record that is the joint-worst in the league. And the habit returned as Lester pounced when the ball ran free in the box to curl past Walker to level in the 90th minute.

As disappointing as it was, things could be worse. Their opponents remain five points from safety and, while manager Sheridan and his management team have been given

the backing of the board, the fans are far less united.

The boos that greeted Sheridan's decision to replace Morgan with Tope Obadeyi with 11 minutes left illustrated clearly how little confidence some supporters have in the current regime.

Things aren't that bad at the The Bank's – yet. Saddlers fans should be reminded that Walsall were two places lower than their current 21st position, and a point worse off, this time last year.

If they can somehow rediscover the winning habit they could escape the drop zone immediately.

But if they continue to throw away leads like they did on Saturday, it is not just going to be a blue Christmas but an unhappy new year. Only time will tell.

Chances missed as Lockmen earn draw

BOTH sides had chances to win but Willenhall had to settle for a 1-1 Midland Alliance draw with Boldmere St Michaels.

Jemiah Richards' 32nd-minute goal gave Willenhall the advantage but the visitors levelled before half-time.

Willenhall broke the deadlock when Tom Clews' free-kick from 40 yards bounced into the goalmouth and Richards' touch took the ball beyond Gibson.

However, three minutes before the break the visitors levelled when Flynn slid out of his area with the ball. From the free-kick, Boldmere skipper Neil Watkins headed home from close in.

Mitch Fellows went close on 49 minutes when his shot was touched just wide by Gibson before Danico Johnson muscled past a defender, fed Fellows whose shot was blocked and then saw Jack Austin put the follow-up high and wide.

The Lockmen thought they had won it on 88 minutes when Fellows set up Johnson who went wide.

Willenhall's next home game is on Boxing Day against Tipton Town (1.45pm).

Late goals break the deadlock

TWO late goals sentenced Pelsall to a 2-0 defeat in their Midland Combination Premier Division clash at home to Brocton.

Just as the game seemed to be drifting to a goalless draw, Gary Fife eluded his markers to break the deadlock and find the net.

The goal was a little hard on Pelsall but Fife scored again almost on time as the ball was slotted through the Pelsall defence who, for once, could not close him down.

Pelsall had chances but failed to make them count. Mitch Green fired wide and Phil Gayle found himself clear only to fire at Adam Whitehouse in the Brocton goal.

The pace of play was a little slower from both sides in the second period and neither could break through solid defences, until the two late goals condemned Pelsall to a home defeat.

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Blown out of the way

ALDRIDGE Rugby Club's recent run of league success came off the rails when they went down 17-3 Five Ways Old Edwardians.

In the first half with the aid of a following breeze Aldridge had most of the territory with the forwards well in command.

Three scoring opportunities were squandered when they had got the ball over the line but failed to get it down.

By the break all they had got to show for their endeavours was a three point lead from a Mark Large penalty.

It was all change in the second half, though.

With a tail wind Ways began to claim the territorial advantages.

The visitors struggled to clear their lines or discover any sort of cohesive game plan that would provide an attacking platform and threatened rarely.

Flanker Dave Wright crossed the line but again did not get the adjudication.

Ways centre Dave Potter crossed close to the posts.

As Aldridge lost composure, the penalty count started to mount and Ways scrum-half Cameron Wag-horne slotted over four.

Briggs on the move to Olympic

RUSHALL OLYMPIC have completed the signing of former Hednesford and Willenhall midfielder Mark Briggs.

Former Albion youngster Briggs, who has had spells playing in America and Denmark, will fill the gap created by Danny Bragoli's move to Hinkley.

The 29-year-old has been playing for Ryman Premier League side Tooting & Mitcham but the Wolverhampton-born playmaker wants to return to his roots.

"He should be a good signing for us," said Pies boss Neil Kitching.

"One or two things happened at Tooting and he was moving back up here and we have managed to get him.

"He's more of a ball player than a ball winner. He's very good on the ball and passes it simple. He will open up doors for us to get strikers away, which is what we need.

"We are always looking to bring in players who are better than what we have got. For us it's about strengthening and getting up to the level we need to be at."



Alex Pritchard, five, and father Paul Gillott, 41, with Alex Nicholls, George Bowerman and Adam Chambers.

Butler humbled by hospital visit

SKIPPER Andy Butler admitted he was humbled after Walsall's Christmas trip to Manor Hospital.

The squad – including Adam Chambers, Alex Nicholls and George Bowerman – spent two hours handing out presents donated by the Walsall Supporters' Trust and meeting patients on Monday.

And Butler said the players were left appreciating what they had and were pleased to meet and greet their fans.

"It's quite humbling and you realise how lucky you are. Hopefully they enjoyed us coming along and all make full recoveries," said Butler, dad to

three-year-old Ashton. "There weren't too many kids in the children's ward which is good.

"We met one kid who had broken his leg playing football so he's in there for Christmas, which isn't nice.

"Hopefully we brought a bit of festive cheer to them.

"As a dad you don't want your kids in hospital, or at all, so if we managed to bring a bit of joy with a few presents then that's great.

"There weren't too many Walsall fans there but one said he's going to start coming to the games now."

Five-year-old Alex Pritchard, who

was diagnosed with diabetes on Monday, was excited to play table football with them.

His mother Rachel, who is also due to give birth soon, said: "He was delighted to meet the players."

The Saddlers host Sheffield Wednesday on Boxing Day with the visitors bringing 3,500 supporters.

The Banks's Stadium ticket office will be closed from 12pm on December 23.

Fans can purchase in person from the Banks's Stadium ticket office, online at www.saddlers.co.uk or calling 01922-651414/16.

Ace Alex sprints in to launch fightback

WALSALL Rugby Club dug deep to secure a tremendous 21-18 win at Camp Hill.

They had to contend with spoiling tactics by the home side and a glue-pot pitch but scored a penalty try and a try through winger Alex Greenslade.

Three Briggs penalties for Camp Hill and one from Walsall's fly-half Matt Wood, made it 9-3, then on 19 minutes the referee tired to life as the referee tired of Camp Hill's infringements.

He yellow carded two home players in quick succession. Walsall applied concerted pressure with a series of driving line-outs and from a resulting series of scrums the front-row combination of Bradshaw, Clarke and Gauden forced Camp Hill to buckle. Wood converted the penalty try.

The referee also yellow-carded Walsall second-rower Dave Merlin, then another home player on the stroke of half-time.

Camp Hill added three more penalties to go ahead 18-10, then Walsall finally snapped into gear. On 56 minutes, forward drives set up possession for John Pette. The fly-half moved the ball crisply to the narrow side where full-back Chris Mould broke the Camp Hill defence and put Alex Greenslade into the corner.

Other chances were to come Walsall's way as Merlin, Dickson and Clarke were all denied. All the determination and effort were only rewarded by two more Wood penalties for a deserved victory in a game Walsall might well have lost in previous seasons.

NOW IS TIME FOR FESTIVE STEEL – LEE

LEE BEEVERS has called on Walsall to finally find their steel and end their wretched home form. The Saddlers face back-to-back festive home games against Sheffield Wednesday and Rochdale in their battle against the drop.

They have won just four times at home this term but after drawing their last five away games Beever wants the same resilience at the Banks's Stadium.

"We need to take our away form into our home form and just keep it going," he said, ahead of Wednesday's Boxing Day visit and Rochdale's New Year's Eve game at WS1.

"I don't think it's easier to play away. We're just getting on with it and we seem to be turning out good results.

"Away from home there's no pressure on us to go and take the game to them. The home team's under pressure at the minute to take the win which is what it's like for us at home.

"It wasn't our tactic to sit deeper (in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Chesterfield) in the second half. We didn't start second half very well. We tried to stop the runners which meant they got a lot more of the ball."

Wednesday are second after their thrilling 4-4 draw with Huddersfield on Saturday while Rochdale – who sacked boss Steve Eyre this week – are level on points with the 21st-placed Saddlers.

Beevers insisted they must treat both teams with respect and adapt to their different qualities.

"They are going to be two totally different games," the 28-year-old defender said.

"The teams play in two different ways so we are going to have to adapt for each and every game but hopefully we can come away with the points.

"Against Charlton we played really well. As long as we can keep that type of performance going week in week out I'm confident we can get points.

"We don't approach the

By Nick Mashiter

Sheffield Wednesday game any different to any other game. We have got to turn up and work hard to get something from the game."

Meanwhile, boss Dean Smith has insisted he controls his own destiny and rejected any job fears.

The Saddlers boss is confident he can handle the pressure despite just two wins in the last 21 games.

Just one league win since August has left the season on the brink but Smith insisted he isn't worried about his position.

Charge

"Not at all, I know what my job is," he said, with the Saddlers 21st in League One. "My job is to get the players out there and performing to the best of their ability. That doesn't change.

"Am I in charge of my own future? Yes I think I am. I pick a team every week to try to go out and win.

"It's not where we want to be, I was hoping to continue the momentum but we've faded away.

"What we have to remember is where we are, who we are and what we stand for.

"I'm fully behind the players because even on poor Tuesday night with 10

men against Dagenham we were the best team for 50 minutes."

Smith conceded pressure and uncertainty it is the nature of the job but insisted managers don't get enough time.

He said: "It's the way football goes. If you look at the clubs who are the most successful it's the managers who have had the longevity.

"Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United and David Moyes at Everton – they have done really well. John Still at Dagenham with the resources he has at his disposal too."

Saturday's 1-1 draw at Chesterfield kept Walsall in the drop zone – a point behind fifth bottom Scunthorpe – and Smith admitted the league has gone to form.

He said: "The top teams are winning their games and they are strong. We're competing in a league with Sheffield Wednesday who get 18,000, Sheffield United who get 18,000 and Huddersfield. They have got the financial clout to go and get the players who perform.

"They are deservedly at the top of the league but the ones at the bottom have to scrap and fight away."



Alex Nicholls celebrates his goal at Chesterfield with fellow striker Jon Macken

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From left to right:
Edward, Matt, John and Thomas Shotton

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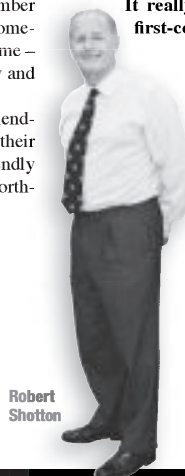
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Robert Shotton



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S - LIMITED STOCKS AVAILABLE

EXTRA
discounts
off all sale prices
BOXING DAY

Extra Discount Price
£299



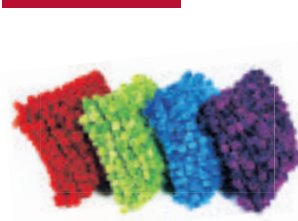
Gamma combination wardrobe
NORMAL £449 SALE £349

Extra Discount Price
£149



Ursula bedstead (includes slats)
NORMAL £499 SALE £249

Extra Discount Price
£29



Pebble cushions - assorted bright colours
NORMAL £44 SALE £33

Extra Discount Price
£799



Collins cornergroup sofa
NORMAL £1499 SALE £949

Nolte Mobil fitted bedrooms -
Free UK delivery and fitting

SAVE 30%

Mattresses -
Large stocks available for
immediate delivery

FROM £49

Silentnight double
drawer divan

NORMAL **£599**
SALE **£349**
EXTRA DISCOUNT PRICE
£299

Bilbao bar stool -
adjustable height

NORMAL **£99**
SALE **£49**
EXTRA DISCOUNT PRICE
£29

Sliding wardrobe -
modern design

NORMAL **£599**
SALE **£399**
EXTRA DISCOUNT PRICE
£379

Denby - dinnerware
sets, selected designs

SAVE 50%

Lydia leather double bedstead
(including slats)

NORMAL **£599**
SALE **£299**
EXTRA DISCOUNT PRICE
£249

Rugs - assorted designs
and colours

SAVE OVER 60 %

Vi Spring ex-showroom pocket
sprung divan sets

SAVE 60%

Columbia twist carpet -
choice of colours

NORMAL **£12m²**
SALE **£10m²**
EXTRA DISCOUNT PRICE
£6m²

Slumberland 4 drawer
double divan set

NORMAL **£799**
SALE **£399**
EXTRA DISCOUNT PRICE
£349

Montgomery's
Ready made curtains

SAVE UP TO 50%

DEPOSIT - INTEREST FREE CREDIT

Extra Discount Price
£399



Woodland extending dining table and 4 chairs
NORMAL £1299 SALE £699

Extra Discount Price
£499



Ashley 3 seater sofa
NORMAL £849 SALE £599

Extra Discount Price
£11.50m²

HALF PRICE

Carpets & Flooring



Lomand twist carpet
NORMAL £23m² SALE £19m²

WELLS & GAMBIE

BEAT

NATUZZI

CONCEPT



0%
A P R

Deferred Interest Free Credit available on all orders over £500. Subject to status.
All balances must be paid in June 2012 on the date specified at the time of purchase.
Written details on request. Offer not available on clearance items or in store concessions.
Some items are subject to one per household and only available in limited colours, or the colours shown in this advert.

Cousins

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EXTRA DISCOUNTS OFF ALL SALE PRICES

BE EARLY FOR THE BEST DEALS - LIMITED STOCKS AVAILABLE

sofas. carpets. curtains. beds. dining. bedroom. homeware

Cousins

Christmas & New Year Opening Times

Boxing Day Monday 9am - 5pm, Wednesday 9.30am - 6pm, Friday 9.30am - 6pm,
Saturday (New Years Eve) 9.30am - 5.30pm, Sunday (New Years Day) 11am - 5pm

Late Nights: Tuesday & Thursday 9.30am - 8pm.

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